

Performing Relevance/ Relevant Performances: Shakespeare, Jonson, Hitchcock

To begin: two juxtapositions. The top half of the back page of *The Times* for 19 April 1945 features five photographs from the recently liberated concentration camps. In one an emaciated man dressed in a striped prison uniform looks up from among a charnel house of bodies and half-dead inmates; one shows a truck loaded with corpses; another, rows of unburied dead prisoners with, in the distance, some stretcher-bearers working at the grim task of their interment. The captions are characterised by a sort of restrained shock. Sentences describing the provenance of the pictures are capped with short, unemotional lines about the scenes pictured: 'Some had been beaten to death'; 'The bodies were all terribly emaciated'. These truncated descriptions enact the seeming impossibility of commentary or interpretation. The pictures are arrestingly incongruous in the busy, varied page design. A Beefeater in a bearskin advertises 'honest-to-goodness tobacco' in the bottom left hand corner, the crossword puzzle and bridge problem are in their usual places, the right hand column has theatre listings and other small ads. And underneath these images of human depravity is a review of the Haymarket's new production of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.

No mention is made, clearly, of the context in which the production or the review appears. There are no allusions to the contemporary, although the reviewer admits that the play cannot 'discard its thwarting modernity'. What is striking, though, is the echo in the review of the images above it. Noting as a measure of the production's success 'that we do not smile at the heap of corpses on which the curtain falls', the review suggests that the play's depiction of 'tortures' – presumably the death of the Duchess, or

the depiction of the waxwork models of her husband and children – ‘are perhaps more decorative than horrible. To be anything else would require an apparatus of grisliness which no modern producer can effectively employ’. The Nazi ‘apparatus of grisliness’, the piles of real corpses, and the horribly, compellingly undecorative early images of the liberated camps, all haunt the review, and the wider reception of the production.¹

A second example: the programme for Jonathan Moore’s production of Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, in June 2008. Like *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Revenger’s Tragedy* has been judged difficult to perform, with similar lurches into the ludicrous and an aesthetic of macabre humour. The production makes contemporary relevance clear from the outset as a justification for the play’s revival. The programme opens with the welcome: ‘The Revenger’s Tragedy is the first Jacobean drama we’ve produced for quite some time. These plays for the early 17th century conjure up a society out of control in every way where basic human appetites run rampant and a sense of hedonism and corruption permeates everything. A bit like reading the newspapers today....’. The sense that this a play relevant to the circumstances of the early twenty-first century is most clearly suggested by the reproduction in the programme of a notorious image of American military abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib in Iraq. In this picture, a young army reservist, Sabrina Harmon, is shown bending over the body of an Iraqi prisoner, Manadel al-Jamadi, whose bloodied face is visible above plastic ice packs. Harmon is wearing a cheerful smile and has raised one of her green latexed hands in thumbs-up gesture. No commentary is made on the image, nor on its specific relevance to the play. (It’s striking that *women* in Middleton’s play do not lean grinning over its many corpses, nor indeed

is any one of its murders committed or directly witnessed by a woman – the programme here seems to partake of Vindice's misogyny in a disturbing version of relevance) As a juxtaposition between a violent, inhumane present and the revival of a Jacobean play, *The Revenger's Tragedy* programme enacts something similar to that page of *The Times*. The only difference is that in 2008 relevance is specifically solicited as a necessary explanation for the otherwise perverse choice of entertaining modern audiences with a production of a rebarbative early modern play. Relevance becomes an aspect of direction rather than reception: we can cope with these unfamiliar historical writers only with a strong steer marking their 'likeness to some apparently equivalent situation in the contemporary moment'.² As Andrew Hartley observes in this volume, 'the theatre's first obligation is to the present cultural moment'.

In this chapter, I want to use these exemplary versions of relevance in productions to suggest some of the difficulties of conducting theatrically engaged criticism of early modern plays, and to propose a different answer. I argue that is difficult for academic criticism and performance to come together in the study of non-Shakespearean early modern drama, because criticism has concentrated on historicist approaches whereas performance has turned to presentism.³ The comparison with Shakespeare is a useful one. While the study of Shakespeare in performance has become mainstream, with academic courses, editions and critical works all looking to the theatre and to film versions of the plays, the study of early modern drama in performance is a more fragmentary and elusive object. Many of the emerging protocols for discussing Shakespeare on stage are implicitly comparative, and their appeal for many critics and teachers of the plays is that the range of available performance interpretations makes

manifest the texts' own multiplicity. Thus influential series such as Manchester University Press's *Shakespeare in Performance* and Cambridge University Press's *Shakespeare in Production* work by discussing a number of distinct stage realisations of a particular play, a method in which 'no single approach to the play can be described as more "authentic" than any other' and 'something of the range and variety of the possible interpretations of the play in hand' can be illustrated.⁴ Performance analysis has been absorbed into Shakespeare criticism and pedagogy rather for the reasons that recent textual studies have: because variant productions, like variant texts, corroborate in material form the contingency of the literary work – they are the corollary, and apparent manifestation, of narratives about pluralism intrinsic to the discipline of literary studies.

Because the range of actual performances of non-Shakespearean plays often does not exist, is not adequately documented, or is more disconnected in nature, the study of performance of these plays cannot so readily serve the liberal agenda of multiple literary interpretations. And because academic work on early modern drama has tended to historicise rather than make it presentist, often theatrical realisations do not speak to our vested disciplinary interests, leaving those modern productions of the plays as marginal to our own readings. If contemporary relevance seems the only aesthetic and commercial justification for reviving these plays on the stage, historicism can never easily engage with performance criticism. Even the rebuilt Globe theatre is resolutely 'Shakespeare's Globe', preferring Shakespearean texts and some new commissions over the wealth of non-Shakespearean drama produced for the first and second Globe theatres it imitates.⁵ Early modern scholars have been complicit with the strategies of

familiarisation Susan Bennett identifies in reviews of non-Shakespearean productions – unfamiliar texts are reconciled either by marking their relation to one or other play by Shakespeare, or by identifying some aspect of their contemporary resonance.⁶

In their introduction to *Presentist Shakespeares*, Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes define this critical trend:

we can never, finally, evade the present. And if it's always and only the present that makes the past speak, it speaks always and only to – and about – ourselves. It follows that the first duty of a credible presentist criticism must be to acknowledge that the questions we ask of any literary text will inevitably be shaped by our own concerns, even when these include what we call 'the past'.⁷

This analysis precisely mirrors the encounter between the modern theatre and early modern plays – the production of plays by long-dead hands, particularly those plays with a discontinuous performance tradition in the interim, is inevitably a presentist enterprise, in which the questions asked of the play in performance are shaped by the concerns of the present into which it is being performed. But the rehearsal of presentism as a critical mode has been premised specifically on Shakespearean drama. The term was brought to prominence in Hugh Grady's introduction to his book *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf* (1996), and developed via Terence Hawkes' 2002 *Shakespeare in the Present* and the editorial collaboration of Grady and Hawkes in 2006 on *Presentist Shakespeares*. Ewan Fernie, who contributes to this collection, also promulgates the methodology in *Shakespeare Survey* in 2005, ultimately arguing that 'Hamlet's singular dramatization of spiritualized violence compels us to confront the defining issue of our present: terrorism'.⁸

That presentism might challenge historicism in Shakespeare studies in these ways is hardly news. We are used to performance accounts of engagingly topical plays such as *Henry V* or *The Taming of the Shrew* which read their military or gender politics into serial relevance to contemporary concerns: relevance is already assumed in histories of Shakespeare's ongoing significance. Thus *Henry V* can be, and has been, a play glorifying war and a play condemning it, a play with a heroic Henry and a play with an antiheroic Henry, according to the different historical and ideological circumstances which have brought it back to the stage; *The Taming of the Shrew* has always participated in ongoing debates about gender roles in marriage and in society, and barely a review of a recent production directed by Conall Morrison at the Royal Shakespeare Company in spring 2008 does not draw some parallel, invited by the production, with contemporary sexual politics. Shakespeare's unique cultural position has both generated - and been bolstered by - those humanist versions of Jonson's eulogy 'not for an age but for all time' which implicitly justify the special privileges for Shakespeare's texts in school and university syllabi, in publicly subsidised theatres, and in cultural discourse more widely.

If presentism has its place in Shakespeare studies, it seems less likely that it can challenge historicism in the discussion of other early modern texts, particularly drama. I have not read any academic criticism of a non-Shakespearean play of the period linking it explicitly with our own moment. There is insufficient at stake wholeheartedly to claim for *The Battle of Alcazar* an engagement with issues of cross-cultural violence that can speak to our own anxieties, or that even a modern dress *The Staple of News* offers us a dissection of contemporary consumerist media. Rather, the overriding academic interest

in these plays has been in their historical contextualisation. So we have sustained and stimulating accounts of the ways in which Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the revenge tragedies following in its wake interrogate Elizabethan notions of justice and the law, or post-reformation attitudes to death, or anxieties around social status, or early modern geometries;⁹ subgenres such as 'domestic tragedy' or 'city comedy' have emerged as categories generated by historical, rather than aesthetic, contexts;¹⁰ specific early modern historical contexts have been fruitfully juxtaposed with particular plays, such as the scandalous elopement of Arbella Stuart set against the narrative of *The Duchess of Malfi*.¹¹ While performance information has become a legitimate aspect of recent editions of Shakespeare – indeed, the pressing need to recognise the plays newly *as* theatre is one reason why the recent cycle of editing and rediting Shakespeare has seemed so rapid – the texts of early modern dramatists tend not to collate the often scant theatrical interpretations. Even the most recent volumes of the New Mermaids series of early modern plays do not direct the readers towards theatrical history, although the forthcoming Cambridge edition of Ben Jonson promises to include the 'performance history of the plays through to the present'; the recent Oxford edition of Thomas Middleton does not include a performance history nor does it refer to performance interpretations in footnotes, and a supporting website promises notices of the plays in modern performance but nothing has so far been posted.¹²

The point here is that the turn towards performance in the study of Shakespeare has served in part to accentuate the perceived critical and pedagogical distance between the plays of Shakespeare and those of his contemporaries. The very fact that there are so many theatrical interpretations of Shakespeare's plays validates and perpetuates

assumptions about their contemporary relevance or their timelessness; the difficulties of accessing the scarcer, and less documented, stage history of non-Shakespearean drama apparently attests to its relative obscurity as historical documentation rather than dramatic script. None of the essays in the MLA's *Approaches to Teaching English Renaissance Drama* proposes the study of the plays in modern performance as a possible approach: the material clearly isn't sufficiently accessible.¹³ Even the extant film versions of early modern plays – Alex Cox's *The Revengers Tragedy* (2002) or Middleton's *Changeling* (directed Marcus Thompson, 1998), or more distantly Mike Figgis's metatheatrical *Duchess of Malfi* in his *Hotel* (2001) – cannot be used in the comparative way that multiple film productions of Shakespeare can: in presenting a single film realisation the teacher risks substituting the playtext rather than destabilising it.

That the gap between page and stage in early modern drama is a problem is clear, when we look at the ways in which performance studies have been one of the most lively aspects of recent Shakespearean criticism, and a place where the experience of academics, students, theatre practitioners, and theatregoers can potentially coincide. The kind of future performance studies possible for non-Shakespearean drama will have to go in a different direction. The answer to the discrepancies between academic and theatrical deployments of non-Shakespearean plays, and between the study of Shakespeare and that of the drama of his contemporaries cannot be to try to write performance histories for canonical plays in the ways we have for Shakespeare. This would simply further marginalise the majority of the drama while producing partial and sketchy histories of a few plays by Webster, Jonson and Middleton. It may be to use performance to pursue other critical arguments, as in Roberta Barker's excellent *Early*

Modern Tragedy, Gender and Performance, 1984-2000 (2007), but few will have access to the range of high-status or boutique-venue British productions she is able to reference.¹⁴ Instead, my approach here is a different one. In thinking about performance as a series of formal, dramaturgical possibilities I want to read one early modern dramatist – Ben Jonson – analogically with a formally related version of modern performance – the films of Alfred Hitchcock – to see whether the absence of a narrative history of performances of non-Shakespearean plays might in fact be an advantage in rethinking the texts we count as performances ‘of’ particular plays. In place of Jack Jorgen’s often-cited and elaborated schema of types of Shakespearean film as theatrical, realist or cinematic, or as ‘presentation, interpretation, and adaptation’, this reading substitutes ‘analogy’ as the way to think about performance possibilities in early modern texts independent of their actual stage history.¹⁵ Or, put another way, the performances we read in relation to early modern texts need not be versions of those texts. We can, I want to argue, cut through the problematic vocabulary of fidelity to the literary text and the multiple taxonomies of adaptation by coupling the early modern play on the page with relevant performances of different kinds.

There are many general potential points of comparison between the development of cinema in twentieth century Hollywood and the development of theatre following the first fixed theatre buildings in London in the late 1560s. Both new representational technologies quickly develop rival studio/company structures within a highly organised commercial organisation, both establish and retain an audience literate in conventions and expectations, developing and marketing genre products which balance innovation with familiarity, both generate a system based on star appeal, both invest in

new technology and encourage an interest in the new and up-to-date, relying on fresh, not backlist, products. There have been some local comparisons between Hollywood cinema and early modern drama, in, for example. Katharine Eisaman Maus' passing comparison of revenge tragedy and westerns, or Stephen Orgel's use of the playfully enigmatic conclusion of Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* in his article on Shakespeare's cross-dressing comedies, or in Barbara Freedman's suggestive discussion of cinematic theories of the gaze in relation to the spatial dynamics of the Elizabethan theatre.¹⁶ The dominance of the historicist paradigm has, however, made these readings exceptional, because their explicit anachronism cannot be readily assimilated to the models of thick contextualisation. In what follow I want to propose that the comparison between Hitchcock and Jonson offers a new direction for early modern performance studies which is less in thrall to ideas of realisation and theatre history, and instead more attuned to formalist parallels and performance possibilities.

The comparison between Hitchcock and Jonson – both apparently bullying, fat, egotistical, Catholic, misogynist, self-conscious, innovative veterans of their two media – prompts some immediate axes of discussion. I want to bring out some local comparisons to develop the ways they make and break contracts with their audience, and their shared resistance to the conventions by which, as dramatic author and cinematic *auteur*, they should remain out of sight in the performance. Two rhetorical terms will also be useful in offering opposed relations between author and work. The first is the technique of *prosopopoeia* – the speech of an imaginary person. Prosopopoeiae were grammar school exercises in which sixteenth-century schoolboys took on the persona of a

mythological or historical figure in order to express their character through their speech.

As George Puttenham puts it in his *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589):

Prospopopoeia, or the counterfeit impersonation. [...] if ye will feign any person with such features, qualities and conditions, or if ye will attribute any human quality, as reason or speech, to dumb creatures or other insensible things, and do study (as one may say) to give them a human person, it is [...] *prospopopoeia*, because it is by way of fiction.

Propopopoeia is, then, the rhetorical construction of different voices within a fiction: the art of characterisation. It is intrinsic to the literary impersonations of which drama is made. The success of dramatic prosopopoeia is in the effacement of the author: instead, distinct and 'diverse personages', as Puttenham has it, carry the fiction.¹⁷ The writer's skill is implicitly judged by his absence from this fiction and the provisional credibility of his fictional characters. In this, prosopopoeia functions here as the opposite of a different rhetorical term, *parabasis*. Parabasis also comes from the Greek and means 'a coming forward'. It refers to a movement in Greek Old Comedy, particularly associated with the works of Aristophanes, and typically involves the Chorus coming forward without masks to deliver a speech representing the author's own views on some topical or aesthetic matter.¹⁸ In eschewing the fictional prosopopoeic voice, the chorus adopts the voice of the author – albeit a constructed voice in which the author becomes a character in the play. Parabasis is an unexpected aspect of modern fictional conventions of drama and film, both of which work to marginalise the author's voice from their own diegetic frame.

Early in Hitchcock's 1929 film *Blackmail*, Frank, a police detective, and Alice, a young woman who will later commit a murder in self-defence, are travelling on the

London underground to Lyons' Coffee House. In a short sequence the young couple sit quietly in the right of the frame while attention is drawn to a small boy irritating a corpulent man on the left of the frame. In fact, the actions of the boy seem to be the only motivating purpose for the scene, since we learn nothing about Frank and Alice nor about the plot other than the insignificant fact that they are travelling across the city. The film, that is to say, could have cut to from the police station to the coffee house without narrative disruption. Except it would have lost the fat man, and the fat man is Alfred Hitchcock. Any number of prologues or inductions to Jonson's plays could stand in the same relation to their fictional play as this scene in *Blackmail*: parabastic moments largely concerned not with diegesis but with anti-narrative, with extra-diegetic recognition. Perhaps the most ready example is the most obvious: the figure 'Author' in his study at the end of the Folio's *Poetaster* in a scene described as an 'apologeticall Dialogue: which was [...] all the answer I euer gaue, to sundry impotent libells then cast out (and some yet remaining) against me, and this Play'.¹⁹ When Hitchcock and Jonson appear in their texts they are not unmediatedly themselves: rather, they are parabastic characters who invent and develop a fictional persona with which they come to be associated. The purposes of this aesthetic of parabasis are partly commercial – each attempts to establish himself as the primary agent of the production and thus the ultimate object of spectator desire – and partly an expression of an anti-diegetic or non-realist understanding of their medium.

Work on what Joseph Loewenstein has memorably called Jonson's 'bibliographic ego' has largely been concerned with his self-presentation in print: in the carefully scholarly marginalia to the theatrical flop *Sejanus*, for instance, or in the grandiose

ambition registered by the publication of his *Folio Works* in 1616.²⁰ The result of the focus on these fruitful lines of bibliographic enquiry, coupled with the relative paucity of information about an ongoing stage history for most of Jonson's plays, has been that scholarship has tended inadvertently to collude with Jonson's own antitheatrical prejudice. Such is the success of Jonson's own efforts in prioritising page over stage that discussions of his plays have focussed more on their textual than their theatrical presentation, seeing the study, rather than the theatre, as their proper sphere.²¹ But Jonson's self-presentation is as anxious in performance as it is in print. His prologues repeatedly concern themselves less with the play than with its author: *Volpone*, for example, begins with a thirty-six line prologue in which the poet or his pronouns feature some eighteen times. *The Magnetic Lady* introduces, rather in the manner of those *Muppets* hecklers Statler and Waldorf who deliver themselves of a barrage of deprecating comments aficionados call 'balconisms', two novice theatregoers Masters Probee and Damplay who are inducted into the play by way of a primer in the works of its author. The Boy tells them that 'the *Author*, beginning his studies of this kind, with *every man in his Humour*, and after, *every man out of his Humour*, and since continuing in all his *Playes*, especially those of the *Comick* thred, whereof the *New-Inne* was the last, some recent humours still or manners of men, that went along with the times, finding himselfe now neare the close, or shutting up of his Circle, hath phant'sied to himselfe in *Idea* this *Magnetick Mistris*'²². This introduction establishes that the interpretation and reception of the play need to be seen in the context of Jonson's literary biography, as part of a narrative of previous titles and ongoing preoccupations. Probee and Damplay are uninformed and unimpressed, prompting the Boy to coach them, after each act, in the classical conventions observed by the poet, until the lesson starts to stick: 'Our parts

that are to the Spectators, or should heare a *Comedy*, are to await the processe, and events of things, as the *Poet* presents them, not as wee would corruptly fashion them' (Chorus Act V, 10-14). Probee and Damplay's education as Jonsonian spectators has brought them to recognise the poet's control over the piece in which he does not directly appear, but in which his presence is dominant. These tantalising near-cameos characterise Jonson's self-presentation in his plays. Inductions to *Bartholomew Fair* and to *The Staple of News* allude to his proximity and raise the prospect that he might appear, as in the graphic deictic breathlessness of Gossip Mirth in *Staple*: 'Yonder he [the Poet] is within (I was i' the Tiring-house a while to see the Actors drest) rowling himself up and down like a tun, i' the midst of 'hem'.²³

If Jonson's presence in the playhouse is alluded to and his authority asserted by his various theatrical surrogates, Hitchcock's presence in his films is more visible, albeit fleetingly. Over his career he made cameo appearances in thirty-seven of his films: *Blackmail* is the third of his films in which he appears. By the early 1950s, trailers for Hitchcock films were encouraging viewers to look out for the iconic director: hunting Hitchcock had become one of the dominant ludic pleasures of watching one of his films. In these cameos, Hitchcock is typically in profile, walking in the middle or back of the shot, rarely interacting with the main characters and never taking part in the main business of the scene or plot. In *The Birds* (1963), for instance, he crosses the path of Tippi Hedren in the pet shop doorway, with two white terriers; he is carrying a double bass onto a train as Farley Granger gets off it in *Strangers on a Train* (1951); he walks past the phonebooth in which George Sanders makes an important call in *Rebecca* (1940). In each case the cameo demands that we recognise it as such and suspend, momentarily, our

engagement with the film's fictional world. Hitchcock's presence in his films is thus anti-narrative and anti-diegetic. The ingenuity with which Hitchcock insinuates his own physical presence into his films suggests considerable enjoyment in the challenge. *Lifeboat* (1944), a film entirely set on a lifeboat and therefore offering none of the busy street-scene bystander roles, saw Hitchcock's familiar figure in the 'before' and 'after' poses of a newspaper advertisement for the 'Reduco Obesity Slayer' men's corset. In *Rope* (1948), another claustrophobic film without obvious minor roles, Hitchcock's silhouette is glimpsed in neon through the window. The pleasure here is apparently double: the pleasure of recognition of the director's outline, and the pleasure at his own cleverness in fitting himself into the frame once again. By the time of the television series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (from 1955), the physical persona of the director has become the single unifying presence in the episodic structure of the show, with his outline a metonym for the kinds of suspense associated with his cinematic direction.

How might these moments – of Jonsonian near-cameo and of Hitchcockian cameo – be related, formally? In the ways in which they bring the parabasis of authorial presence up against the prosopopoeia of dramatic fiction, each works to challenge realist conventions. For the realism of cinema to be sustained we have to be encouraged to forget that these apparently convincing scenes are in fact played out in two dimensions for unseen cameras and an unseen directorial intelligence, where 'point of view' editing places the director behind, not in front of, the camera. As one critic of Hitchcock notes, 'the cameos pose serious difficulties for leading models of narrative by playing with the distinction between the world of the film (the diegesis, the world contained within the cinematic discourse, the world of the characters and their problems) and the world

outside (the world of the filmmaker and the audience)'.²⁴ Hitchcock's insistent cameos thus challenge the impulse to realism even as his films develop new expressionist forms of *mise-en-scene* to draw spectators more unresistingly into the dark worlds of his fiction. Jonson, we might argue, attempts something similar in a contradictory movement in which self-conscious theatricality works simultaneously to demystify and to corroborate dramatic illusion. When in *The Alchemist*, the tricksters in Lovewit's plague-closed Blackfriars house promise that their alchemy will cure the plague and earn the players' praises at the reopened theatres, this context both confirms and confounds verisimilitude, as does the character of Fitzdottrel in *The Devil is an Ass* going in a hired suit 'to see the *Diuell is an Asse*'.²⁵

Writing of Hitchcock's cameos, Thomas Leitch has discussed their part in a cinema propelled by the contractual expectation of pleasure, rather than of punishment: 'If Gaylyn Studlar is correct in arguing that "cinema is not a sadistic institution but pre-eminently a contractual one based on the promise of certain pleasures", Hitchcock's cameos can serve as a paradigm for cinematic pleasure'.²⁶ Jonson's view of comedy similarly substitutes pleasure – albeit of a bracing sort – for sadism in a vision of transformative satire: 'All gall and coppresse, from his inke he drayneth,/ Onely, a little salt remayneth,/ Wherewith, he'll rub your cheeks, til (red with laughter)/ They shall looke fresh, a weeke after'.²⁷ And, just as Hitchcock's cameos give pleasure from parabasis, by rewarding an attentive audience eager to spot the director, so Jonson's own references to himself in his work, as in the Induction to *The Magnetic Lady*, gesture towards an ideal audience already familiar with his work and able to make connections

across discrete plays. Like Jonson, that is to say, Hitchcock is interested in constructing and rewarding what Stanley Fish has described as 'the community of the same'.²⁸

That Hitchcock's cinema is 'contractual' is suggestive. The idea of a contract between audience and author is implicit in much of Jonson's work and explicit in the Induction to *Bartholomew Fair*. The Scrivener draws up articles of agreement between 'the *Spectators* or *Hearers*, at the *Hope* on the Bankeside, in the County of *Surrey* on the one party; And the *Author of Bartholomew Fayre* in the said place, and County on the other party'.²⁹ Strikingly, Jonson's contract is between the audience and the author, not between the audience and the players. In return for a 'new sufficient Play [...] merry, and as full of noise, as sport: made to delight all, and to offend none' (81-2), the audience's responsibility is to forego over-ingenious interpretations, not to hanker after old-fashioned forms of entertainment, and to enjoy 'his or their free-will of censure, to like or dislike at their owne charge' (85-7). It's analogous to Hitchcock's trailers for his films in which, without the scrivener-figure as middleman, he repeatedly sets out the terms for the audience's engagement with the film. The film trailer for *Psycho* (1960), for example, is modestly headlined with 'the fabulous Mr Alfred Hitchcock is about to escort you on a tour of the location of his new motion picture, 'Psycho'', against a high angle shot of Hitchcock standing in the parking lot of Bates Motel. A long sequence follows in which Hitchcock, often casting a characteristic shadow, acts as a lugubrious estate agent around the motel and house, hinting at the crimes which have taken place there, as if they were real events. Reaching the bathroom, Hitchcock pulls open the shower curtain, and the trailer cuts to the menacing music and famous scream of that iconic scene. The trailer ends with a new demand from the director of the audience: 'the

picture you must see from the beginning... or not at all!... for no one will be seated after the start of Alfred Hitchcock's 'Psycho'.

Both Jonson and Hitchcock construct a specific contractual relationship with their audience, but each is ready to break that contract. When, at the end of *Epicoene*, the eponymous character is revealed to have been a man in women's clothing, something of the implicit contract of early modern theatregoers has been broken by the author: in taking a man in women's clothing for a woman – an apparent necessity in the all-male theatre of the time – audiences are in this play shown to have been blinded to the real situation. Their support for the play, in accepting a male actor in a woman's part, has been abused: 'Jonson has torn apart the whole fabric of illusion on which the art of performance in their theatre rested'.³⁰ Perhaps Hitchcock's *Sabotage* (1936), his film based on Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, might stand as an analogy. In a climactic sequence, the young boy Stevie is sent by his stepfather to deliver a bomb disguised as a reel of film. Hitchcock cuts between pictures of the ingenuous boy travelling by bus with his deadly delivery, and the clock of Big Ben moving towards the countdown. Every expectation is that the tension is being racked up in order that, at the final moment, Stevie will be saved from his fate. Writing for a magazine in 1949 under the heading 'The Enjoyment of Fear', Hitchcock makes it clear that this is a deliberately cruel strategy of violence to the audience and the contract:

that episode in *Sabotage* was a direct negation of the invisible cloak of protection worn by sympathetic characters in motion pictures. In addition, because the audience knew the film can contained a bomb and the boy did not, to permit the bomb to explode was a violation of the rule forbidding a direct combination of suspense and terror, or forewarning and surprise.³¹

In manipulating audience response and in rewriting contracts which suggests reciprocity but ultimately affirm the author/director's control, Jonson and Hitchcock can be seen to use parallel strategies. Each, perhaps, can illuminate the other.

I have been trying to suggest here an awareness of performance possibilities in early modern plays which does not require the literal performance of these texts in order to be activated. Obviously, it would be very easy to identify numerous ways in which Jonson and Hitchcock are not at all, and could not be, similar: recent literary scholarship has put a higher value on showing how things are distinct rather than on connecting them. My analogy is formal rather than thematic – it tries to identify dramatic effects rather than narrative echoes, and thus *Sabotage* is the analogy for *Epicoene* with which it is seen to share the formal breaking of an implicit contract with the spectator, rather than, say, Neil Jordan's 1992 film *The Crying Game* (with which it might be seen to share the thematic revelation that a character thought to be female is actually male). So although *Tamburlaine* and *The Terminator* (dir. James Cameron, 1984), or *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Dark Knight* (dir. Christopher Nolan, 2008) have attractive thematic parallels, I am more interested here in how we can think about dramatic effect by seeing analogous dramaturgical manipulations – the pacing of, say, Marx Brothers films alongside the pacing of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, or the effect of different representational modes in *The Wizard of Oz* (dir. Victor Fleming, 1939) and *The White Devil*. By taking as the object of enquiry *modes of performance* shared anachronistically across media rather than, more narrowly, the text as realised on stage, it is a method that decenters the priority of the literary text. Or, rather, it proposes two analogous texts of equal validity and critical interest, given that neither is in any sense a version, copy,

adaptation, or interpretation of the other. What performance studies has, it seems to me, failed to do is to unseat the notion of the 'text itself'; performance is valuable in the literary academy and in the classroom when it confirms or extends critical narratives pursued independently of the stage. And it has also done duty, like forms of theory in their time, and like archive research in prestigious libraries in ours, in dedemocratizing (in Andrew Hartley's words elsewhere in this volume) literary study: the geographically specific, temporally ephemeral nature of performance means that it is directly available only to a relatively small audience close to large, cultured metropolitan cities or campuses. My suggestion that Jonson and Hitchcock be read as analogies also serves to reinforce the popular, commercial imperatives of the early modern theatre, and to suggest that, like modern cinema, it could expect a good deal of sophistication from its audience. By instating Hitchcock as a performance of, and for, Jonson, modes of performance become more accessible and experiential, and less archival and textual: more present, if not exactly presentist.

Arguing about the difficulties of carrying over the methodologies used in performance criticism of Shakespeare won't offer a new direction for the integration of performance awareness into the study of early modern dramatic texts. Instead, I have suggested here that an alternative and analogical version of performance study can disrupt historicist conventions and promote an anachronistic dialogue between different types of performance. If performance criticism of early modern plays could sidestep the priority of the literary text in discussions of adaptation and stage realisation, and instead draw on a range of radically relevant performances, we might be able to close the gap

between performance and the academy, and between the dynamic study of Shakespeare and the more marginalised historical interest in his contemporaries.

I am grateful to the English seminar at the University of Rutgers for comments on a version of the Jonson/Hitchcock argument, and in particular to Emily Bartels, Chris Chism, Kate Flint, and Michael McKeon for their questions and insights.

¹ *The Times*, 19 April 1945, p.6. Other newspaper reviewers made contemporary connections more explicitly: in the *Daily Telegraph* W.A. Darlington felt that ‘probably the only audience that would respond to this play today as Webster intended would be an audience of the Hitler youth’; for the *Observer* Ivor Brown suggested that ‘the horrors seem almost trifling when matched with modern fact in Germany’. See Michael Billington, *Peggy Ashcroft* (John Murray Ltd: London, 1988), p.113.

² Susan Bennett, *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past* (Routledge: London, 1996), p.79.

³ Andrew Hartley’s argument in his ‘Page and Stage Again’ identifies the same gap between the historicism of the academy and the presentist impulses of the theatre, and proposes a different solution, but one which, like mine, rests on a sort of performance – for him the embodiment of the script in the actor’s present body, for me the identification of analogous performance texts.

⁴ J.S. Bratton and Julie Hankey, series statement for *Shakespeare in Production* volumes, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996- ; J.R. Mulryne and J.C.Bulman, ‘Series Editors’ Preface’ to *Shakespeare in Performance* volumes, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1987- .

⁵ The Globe’s contribution to non-Shakespearean drama has been its significant ‘Read not Dead’ series of stage readings: the claim on its website that ‘since the doors first opened at the Globe the theatre season has included plays by other early modern playwrights such as Middleton and Marlowe’ refers to its earliest performance seasons rather than the schedule patterns established since 2000 (www.globelink.org/resourcecentre/otherplays/ accessed 1 June 2008).

⁶ Bennett, p.79.

⁷ Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, ‘Presenting Presentism’, in *Presentist Shakespeares* eds Grady and Hawkes (Routledge: London, 2006), p.5. This introduction is heavily indebted to Hawkes’ earlier *Shakespeare in the Present* (Routledge: New York, 2002).

⁸ Ewan Fernie, ‘Shakespeare and the Prospect of Presentism’, *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2005), p.169.

⁹ In, for example, James Shapiro’s ‘“Tragedies Naturally Performed”: Kyd’s Representation of Violence’ in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* eds David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (Routledge: New York and London, 1991); Robert N. Watson, *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (University of California Press: Los Angeles and Berkeley, 1994); Frank Whigham, *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996); Henry S. Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Politics and the Practical Spatial Arts 1580-1630* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2006).

¹⁰ See John A Twyning, ‘City Comedy’, and Lena Cowen Orlin, ‘Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage’ in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama* ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Blackwell: Oxford, 2002) for indicative survey treatments of these genres.

¹¹ Sara Jayne Steen, ‘The Crime of Marriage: Arbellia Stuart and the Duchess of Malfi’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991), 61-76;

¹² ‘The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson’ at www.cambridge.org/features/literature/cwbj/project/default.htm (accessed 1 June 2008); ‘Thomas Middleton’ at www.thomasmiddleton.org (accessed 1 June 2008).

¹³ Karen Bamford and Alexander Leggatt (eds), *Approaches to Teaching English Renaissance Drama* (Modern Language Association of America: New York, 2002).

¹⁴ Roberta Barker, *Early Modern Tragedy, Gender and Performance, 1984-2000: the Destined Livery* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2007).

¹⁵ Jack J. Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* (University Press of America; Lanham and London, 1991), pp 7-10, p.12.

¹⁶ Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Four Revenge Tragedies* (Oxford World’s Classics: Oxford, 1995) p.ix; Stephen Orgel, ‘Nobody’s Perfect: Or, Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Men?’, *Southern Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989), 7 - 29; Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1991).

¹⁷ Gavin Alexander (ed.), *Sidney’s ‘The Defence of Poesy’ and Selected Literary Criticism* (Penguin: London, 2004), p. 183.

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- ¹⁸ On parabasis in Greek comedy, see P.W. Harsh, 'The Position of the Parabasis in the Plays of Aristophanes' in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 65 (1934) and Thomas K. Hubbard, *The Mask of Comedy: Aristophanes and the Intertextual Parabasis* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1991).
- ¹⁹ Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, Epilogue, 3-6, in *Ben Jonson* eds C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson, Volume IV (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1932).
- ²⁰ Joseph Loewestein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002), p.2; see also Jennifer Brady and W.H. Herendeen (eds), *Ben Jonson's 1616 Folio* (University of Delaware Press: Newark and London, 1991).
- ²¹ For two notable exceptions to this tendency, see Richard Cave *et al* (eds), *Ben Jonson and Theatre: Performance, Practice, Theory* (Routledge: London, 1991) and Brian Woolland (ed.), *Jonsonians: Living Traditions* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003).
- ²² Ben Jonson, *The Magnetick Lady* Induction 99-106, in *Ben Jonson* Volume VI eds C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1938).
- ²³ Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News* Induction 61-4, in *Ben Jonson* Volume VI eds C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1938).
- ²⁴ Thomas M. Leitch, *Find the Director and other Hitchcock Games* (University of Georgia Press: Athens, 1991), p.2.
- ²⁵ Ben Jonson, *The Divell is an Asse* (I.IV.21) in *Ben Jonson* Volume VI eds C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1938).
- ²⁶ Leitch, p.5.
- ²⁷ Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* Prologue 33-6, in *Ben Jonson* Volume V eds C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1937).
- ²⁸ Stanley Fish, 'Author-Readers: Jonson's Community of the Same', *Representations* 7 (1984), 26-58.
- ²⁹ Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fayre*, Induction, 64-7, in *Ben Jonson* Volume VI eds C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1938).
- ³⁰ Richard Allen Cave, *Ben Jonson* (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1991), p.71.
- ³¹ Alfred Hitchcock, 'The Enjoyment of Fear' in *Hitchcock on Hitchcock* ed. Sidney Gottlieb (Faber: London, 1995), p.121.